

# V SHE MAY LOOK CLEAN, BUT...

**Cartoons played an important role in the military's health-education efforts during World War II.**

**MICHAEL RHODE examines some of the educational material cartoonists produced to safeguard enlisted men.**

**I**n 1941, America entered World War II and so did its cartoonists. Stateside patriots like Milton Caniff and draftee cartoonists like Bill Mauldin, George Baker and Dave Breger raised troop morale by producing cartoons or strips based on conditions in the field. The Army and Navy also hired cartoonists to educate G.I.s by creating short animated films, posters and pamphlets on the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases.

Cartoons had already been used to warn against diseases that soldiers could easily avoid through modified behaviors. Malaria, typhus and schistosomiasis (spread respectively by mosquitoes, lice and snails) are preventable with simple procedures. Three animated shorts on malaria prevention—*Private Snafu vs. Malaria Mike*, *Target Snafu* (or *Private Snafu in Target for Tonight*) and *It's Murder, She Says*—were released in the final two years of the war. The Army Pictorial Service made another 50 cartoon trailers on malaria prevention that were shown with full-length motion pictures. With the discovery of antibiotics, vene-

real disease (or "VD" in the common parlance) also became easily curable during the war, and the government launched an intensive educational effort.

The Surgeon General's Office oversaw the Army's health-education efforts. Cartoonists and contracted artists created posters and pamphlets that went through Washington, D.C., for approval. The Government Printing Office printed the posters in Washington, and not until early 1943 did posters begin reaching the field. Soon after, the government set up contracts with firms to provide finished artwork. Photographic miniatures of posters were sent to the field, where local printers could enlarge and reproduce them for mass distribution.

The Army and Navy hired top-notch cartooning talent to create their posters, which had an overall emphasis on directness and simplicity. As Lieutenant Commander Jerome Burke said of the Navy's mandate for posters, "If they are not presented in such a manner so that any intellect can understand them with the least of thought processes, they are worthless."

All artwork courtesy of  
National Museum of Health &  
Medicine, Armed Forces  
Institute of Pathology,  
Washington, D.C.

*Them Days Is Gone Forever* by Al Posen, 1943. Posen's comic-strip work spanned five decades—from the 1920s into the 1960s—and included *Jinglet and Sweeney and Son*, both of which also appeared in comic books published by Dell. Posen's *Ella and Her Fella*, *Jinglet and Sweeney and Son* ran in *Popular Comics* from 1936–38, and *Sweeney and Son* ran in *Super Comics* from 1938–40. At least two of Posen's *Them Days Is Gone Forever* series appeared. The Navy published a version of this poster with the uniforms altered to reflect the appropriate branch of service.



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*VD: American Soldier Could Catch It With Ease, But—Prophylaxis Prevents Disease* by Arthur Szyk, 1943. Szyk, a European expatriate, was known for his children's book illustrations and his caricatures of Axis leaders. His caricatures of Axis leaders were collected in *The New Order* in 1941. During the war, Szyk also produced political cartoons for *P.M.* and the *New York Post*. Szyk did at least two posters for the pharmaceutical firm John Wyeth. He caricatured fascist leaders to convey cautionary VD messages, and his work was used when the Army was unable to produce official government posters in sufficient quantities.



# JOE PALOOKA "THEY DON'T MIX" by HAM FISHER



Joe Palooka: "They Don't Mix" by Ham Fisher, 1943. Fisher created Joe Palooka in 1930, and although the strip was mostly ghosted it enjoyed tremendous popularity during World War II, when tens of millions of people read it. Palooka was one of the first comics characters to enlist in the service when America entered the war, a move that launched the strip's readership into the stratosphere.



*Liberty Pass* by Woodcock. Woodcock has largely disappeared from cartoon history, but he was probably a professional cartoonist, since the government hired him to produce at least two posters.

PRO  
STATION

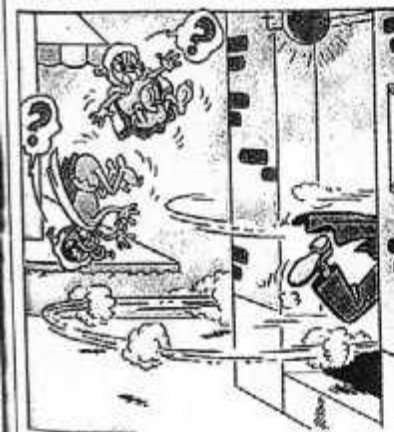


NO PRO

GLOOM



MIS'RY & WOE



THIS IS  
Ann



she's dying to meet you.

*This Is Ann* by Dr. Seuss, 1943. Dr. Seuss, the pen name of Theodor Geisel, served in the Army Signal Corps during the war while continuing to draw political cartoons for *P.M.* After the war, his children's books eclipsed his work as a cartoonist. This is the first page from a 1943 brochure, done in collaboration with Major Munro Leaf, on the hazards of malaria-carrying mosquitoes.

*Syphilis and Gonorrhea ... The Axis Partners* by Paul McCarthy, 1943. McCarthy produced his *Gertie O'Grady* strip from 1940-43 for the New York Daily News/Chicago Tribune Syndicate. He continued as a cartoonist after the war and worked for Harvey Comics in the 1950s.



# YOUR FACE LOOKS SO FAMILIAR



Your Face Looks So Familiar by Frank Robbins, 1943. Robbins is most famous for his adventure strip *Johnny Hazard* which he began in 1944, but he also worked on *Scorchy Smith*. In comic books he drew many characters, including Marvel Comics' Captain America, Daredevil, Ghost Rider, The Human Fly and The Invaders and DC Comics' Batman, Flash, Unknown Soldier, Superboy and The Shadow.



A  
Guy Does Watch  
His Health—If He's A Smart  
Guy! (number 36 in the "Malaria  
Moe" series) and May 1944, both by  
Frank Mack. Mack appears to have  
been an amateur Army cartoonist in the  
southern Pacific, where the Malaria and  
Epidemic Disease Control effort was  
focused. He did two types of cartoon  
posters: Malaria Moe comic strips and  
malaria-awareness calendars with gag  
cartoons and good-girl art. Mack's  
work was accomplished enough  
that it was redistributed in  
other commands. ■



# "MALARIA MOE"

A guy does watch his health.  
-if he's a smart guy!

